INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to people’s lives, including their ability to cope with stressful life events. Research demonstrates that mental health during the pandemic has declined, so it was necessary to look at practical ways to cope with the stress of these changes.

Leisure activities (i.e., hobbies) have been shown to be useful at helping individuals cope during stressful life periods, but there has not been a study that assessed the effects of leisure activities participation in the context of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here, we assess the relationship between participating in leisure activities and overall psychological well-being and the psychological mechanisms for why the positive effect occurred.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS: N = 200 (M_{age} = 19 years; 155 F; 40 M)

Data was collected in January 2021 via an online survey:

LEISURE ACTIVITIES QUESTIONS:
- Frequency of leisure activities participation per week
- Duration of leisure activities participation
- Psychological Mechanisms:
  1. Personal control (e.g., my leisure activities bring me a sense of control to my life)
  2. Self-efficacy (e.g., I am able to step myself from worrying when I am engaged in my hobbies)
  3. Social Affiliation (e.g., my leisure activities have helped me meet new people through virtual platforms)
  4. Sense of Meaning (e.g., I feel like I am contributing to making the world a better place when I am engaging in my hobbies)
  5. Flow (e.g., I lose track of time when I am engaged in my hobbies)

OVERALL WELL-BEING SELF-REPORT MEASURES:
- Coronavirus Anxiety Scale (CAS)
- WHO-5 Well-being Index (WHO-5)
- Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disposable Income

The more participants engaged in leisure activities, the higher their sense of positive well-being. The more participants engaged in leisure activities, the lower their anxiety around the virus. Resiliency was not affected by levels of leisure activities participation.

CONCLUSION

Previous research demonstrated participation in leisure activities, such as exercising or watching a comedy show, can help individuals cope with negative or stressful life events. We showed that participation in leisure activities during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased sense of well-being and decreased levels of anxiety around the virus for those who engaged in them for a minimum of three times per week. Participation in non-physical leisure activities (i.e., watching movies or knitting) may be a positive way to increase psychological well-being. Although the psychological mechanisms for these benefits were unclear in this study, there does seems to be a possibility that flow may be mediator. Future research is recommended to confirm a definitive relationship.